

Way We Were

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The Miners Hospital's First Matrons

The story of the Miners Hospital has been told many times. Founded in 1904 with money contributed from miners' paychecks and with the backing of the union, the hospital was the first in Park City, finally eliminating the need for the sick and injured to endure the long and uncomfortable journey to Salt Lake City. But often missing from the narrative are those who ran the hospital from the inside: the nurses who cared for the patients and oversaw day-to-day operations.

The land for the hospital was donated by Eliza Nelson, wife of Colonel John A. Nelson. Their daughter Mamie V. Nelson was chosen as the hospital's first matron, though because of a "disagreement with management," served less than one month. She was followed by Isabel Grant. Though "matron" is now an antiquated term in the United States, in the early twentieth century it was the respected title for the most senior nurse. The matron was responsible the entire staff under her, including other nurses and domestic staff. Although she essentially ran the hospital with regards to everyday matters, seeing to patient care and operational efficiency, as a woman she had virtually no conclusive say with the board of directors who always called the final shots when it came to management.

Isabel Grant was born in Nova Scotia, Canada, and came to Utah near the turn of the twentieth century. She spent time in both Salt Lake City and Park City and received her nurse's training from Keogh-Wright Hospital in Salt Lake City. The Keogh-Wright was a private hospital that treated patients of varied backgrounds, from injured miners brought in from the mountains to society men and women struck down with appendicitis. During her time at the hospital, Isabel treated countless injured miners, preparing her well for her term at the Miners Hospital. She graduated from Keogh-Wright in early 1904 and began working at the Miners Hospital that same year. The *Park Record* reported that she did "very efficient work," and that she was popular with both her patients and the townspeople.

In 1906, Isabel resigned her position to marry William D. Buck, also from Nova Scotia and resident of Park City. The two had met through family. William was nephew to William Buck, Sr., co-owner of the Welsh, Driscoll, and Buck grocery store. He became superintendent of the Silver King Coalition mill, a position he held from 1906-1914. In 1914, Isabel and William moved back to Nova Scotia to take up farming.

Isabel died suddenly of a heart attack in 1927, at just 47 years old. The *Park Record* reported the death and noted that she and William had kept in touch with "their 'old hometown' through the

columns of *The Record*, never missing an issue during their long absence.” They “have many friends in Park City,” the *Record* said, “who will be pained to hear” of her passing.

Join us here next week for a look at Isabel Grant’s successors at the Miners Hospital.



Image ID: Digi.2.6046

Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Himes-Buck Digital Collection

Caption: Isabel Grant, senior nurse at the Miners Hospital from 1904-1906.

Sources:

*Salt Lake Tribune*, January 1, 1902, January 1, 1903, and January 22, 1905.

*Salt Lake Telegram*, April 6, 1904.

*Intermountain Catholic*, January 6, 1906.

*Deseret News*, April 3, 1908.

*Park Record*, May 14, 1904, January 23, 1941 and January 13, 1972.